

Do you want to make a complaint?

Who to contact and some tips
for making your complaint

February 2012

Some tips for making a complaint

You should make a complaint directly to the agency, providing them the opportunity to address your concerns. Most agencies have a process to manage complaints.

Your contact may bring a broader problem to the attention of the agency, which may result in changes to their policies or procedures that will benefit other members of the community.

Websites are a great source of information. An agency's website will usually have the address of who to write to and how to make a complaint about their service.

We believe that complaints are one of the best sources of feedback on how an agency is performing. This is why we encourage and help agencies to have effective complaint handling systems so that they can better handle complaints about themselves and use the feedback to improve the way they do things.

Note: For the purpose of this brochure organisations are referred to as agencies.

A letter is best, but a phone call may resolve the matter quickly

A written letter of complaint is best, particularly if you are dealing with a large agency. When a letter is received, it is directed to the right area or person.

However, an initial phone call may help clarify some of the issues, or may help you understand the agency's complaint handling procedure. For example, some complaints may require a special form or a statutory declaration. Phoning is also better if dealing with a telephone service supplier.

When making contact by phone, it is best to talk to the person who deals with your type of complaint, as the matter could be resolved immediately. Tell them about your complaint, ask them if they can help and what they intend to do. Always ask for their name and position, keep notes of what was said, as well as the time and date of your phone call.

Phone complaints can be frustrating. You are not always able to speak to the person directly responsible and calls don't get returned. If nothing happens, it is then difficult to prove that you complained in the first place. If there is any doubt about whether your concerns have been properly addressed, write a letter.

What to include in your letter

Summarise in a couple of sentences exactly what your complaint is. Your letter should be clear and to the point, set out in a logical order and include:

- 1.** Print your name clearly at the end of the letter and sign. If you cannot sign your name, another person can sign on your behalf.
- 2.** Make sure your address and contact details are clearly written.
- 3.** Ensure the name of the agency is in the address.
- 4.** Always put the date on your letter.
- 5.** Identify what the complaint is about at the start of the letter eg. Complaint about (name of agency and issue).
- 6.** State clearly what your complaint is about – include relevant dates and times, description of incidents, any explanations you think important.
- 7.** Include any evidence there is to support your claim.
- 8.** If police officers are involved, provide the ID number of the officers.
- 9.** If you have complained to another agency or taken any other action (include details).
- 10.** Say what you think should be done about your complaint.
- 11.** Give a date by which you expect to get a reply in writing (be realistic).
- 12.** Attach copies of all relevant documents eg. medical evidence, photographs etc.

Address your letter to the person responsible

Address your complaint to the person at the agency who is responsible for the area that you are having trouble with, or to the complaint handling officer (if there is one). If you are unable to identify these people, write to the head of the agency. Make it clear in your letter that you consider them responsible for the problem and that they must address your concerns. Your letter should be firm but polite

Complaining online

Many agencies now have an online complaint form on their website. Some of these forms include information that may assist in directing you to the correct agency to deal with your complaint, and may also provide contact details or links to that agency.

Tell them what you need

Tell the agency what action you want to happen for your complaint to be resolved. Be polite and respectful, try and separate your feelings from the issue. Communicating in an angry way could cause offence or defensiveness, and may get in the way of good outcomes, rather than properly address your concerns.

Make sure your demands are not unreasonable. If your request is realistic and within the power of the person you are writing to, you are more likely to resolve your complaint.

You can also ask for details of how they handle complaints, which might help.

Ask for action

Always request that your letter or phone call be acknowledged in writing. Ask the agency for an estimate of how long it will take to deal with your complaint. If there is a degree of urgency involved, let them know and explain why.

Tell them what you will do if the complaint is not resolved

It may be appropriate to tell the person or agency that if the complaint is not resolved, you will complain to someone else. This may be someone higher in the agency or an outside body like your local Member of Parliament, the responsible Minister, the Ombudsman or another complaint handling or appeal body.

Keep records

It is important that you keep copies of all letters you send and receive as well as details of all phone calls. You may need to provide evidence of your dealings with the agency, particularly

if you decide to refer the matter to another agency.

Be persistent

If nothing happens, phone the agency to check on the progress of your complaint. If they are not able to provide you with an update, write again. Make it clear to the person you speak or write to that the problem will not go away unless it is resolved.

What to do if unsuccessful

If your complaint is not properly resolved, or is not dealt with in a reasonable time, you may want to take it to another agency. The following pages set out the names and addresses of various agencies that deal with complaints. For your ease, we have grouped these agencies according to industry or subject matter.

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What can I complain to the NSW Ombudsman about?

You can complain to us if you think you have been unfairly treated by a NSW government agency or employees, or by certain non-government service providers or their employees, the NSW Police Force and police officers and local councils and council staff.

Below is a summary:

NSW State government departments and authorities - We handle complaints about NSW government agency or employees, or by certain non-government service providers or their employees such as:

- NSW government bodies: Dept of Education and Communities, Fair Trading, Housing NSW, NSW Trustee and Guardian, Office of Environment and Heritage, State Debt Recovery Office, WorkCover Authority
- Statutory bodies: Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA), Board of Studies NSW, the Rental Bond Board
- State owned corporations: RailCorp, Landcom and First State Super Trustee Corporation
- State universities

NSW Police Force and police officers -

We handle complaints about the NSW Police Force and police officers. We are responsible for overseeing how the NSW Police Force investigates complaints and manages officers who are the subject of a complaint.

Local councils, councillors and council staff -

We handle complaints about local councils and help make sure councils act fairly and reasonably. We can look at the conduct of councillors and council employees and the administrative conduct of the council itself.

Custodial services - We handle complaints about Corrective Services NSW, Justice Health and the Department of Juvenile Justice, and also take complaints about private correctional centres, such as Junee and Parklea.

Community service providers -

We handle complaints about a range of community services (both government and non-government), including child protection and related

support services provided by Family & Community Services, disability services, home and community care services, out-of-home care services for children and young people, and supported accommodation and assistance program services.

Public interest disclosures (PID) - We are responsible for promoting public awareness and understanding of the PID Act and monitoring its operation. We provide advice and guidance to public sector staff who are thinking about reporting serious wrongdoing.

Child protection matters - We handle complaints about the way government and certain non-government agencies, such as independent schools, have investigated allegations of a child protection nature against their employees, and as well as how they handle knowledge that an employee has been convicted of an offence involving child abuse.

See our website for full details on who can and cannot complain to us about.

www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Administrative Decisions Tribunal

Reviews specific administrative decisions of NSW government agencies, resolve discrimination and retail lease disputes, and exercise disciplinary and regulatory functions over a range of professional and occupational groups.

Level 10, John Maddison Tower
86 Goulburn Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9377 5711

TTY: (02) 9377 5723

Fax: (02) 9377 5859

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adt

Email: ag_adt@agd.nsw.gov.au

Business advocacy

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Brings together three functions; freedom of information (in particular oversight of the operation and review of decisions made by agencies and ministers under that Act); privacy; and government information policy.

GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 1300 363 992

TTY: 1800 620 241

Fax: (02) 9284 9666

Web: www.oaic.gov.au

Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

Office of the Information Commissioner NSW

Supporting access to and disclosure of government information; encouraging an open government culture and ensuring compliance with right to information laws; and defending the public's right to information.

Level 11, 1 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 7011
Sydney NSW 2001

Free call: 1800 463 626

Web: www.oic.nsw.gov.au

Email: oinfo@oic.nsw.gov.au

Small Business Commissioner

The NSW Small Business Commissioner, acts as an independent advocate for small businesses and groups. It also provides low-cost dispute resolution services.

GPO Box 5477
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 1300 795 534

Fax: 1300 795 644

Web:

www.smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au

Email:

we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au

Discrimination, disability or harassment

Anti-Discrimination Board

Level 4, 175 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9268 5555

Toll free: 1800 670 812

TTY: (02) 9268 5522

Fax: (02) 9268 5500

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb

Australian Centre for Disability Law

Formerly the **NSW Disability Discrimination Legal Centre**

Suite 403, 410 Elizabeth Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

PO Box 989
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Phone: (02) 8014 7000
1800 800 708
Advice line: 9.30am to 12.30pm,
Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

TTY: 1800 644 419

Fax: (02) 9211 5518

Web: www.disabilitylaw.org.au

Email: advice@disabilitylaw.org.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

Level 3, 175 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 9284 9600
1300 369 711 switch
1300 656 419 complaints

TTY: 1800 620 241

Fax: (02) 9284 9611

Web: www.humanrights.gov.au

Email: complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au

Australian National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Reporting or complaining about abuse or neglect of a person with a disability at home, in the community, or in any location.

Locked Bag 2705
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Toll free: 1800 880 052

TTY: 1800 301 130

NRS: 1800 555 677

TIS: 131 450

Web: www.disabilityhotline.org

Email: enquiries@disabilityhotline.org

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)

Australian Government-funded disability employment and advocacy services.

Locked Bag 2705
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Free call: 1800 880 052

TTY: 1800 301 130

NRS: 1800 555 677

Fax: (02) 9318 1372

Web: www.crrs.org.au

Email: crrs@pwd.org.au

Intellectual Disability Rights Service

Community legal centre specialising in legal and rights issues.

2C/199 Regent Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

PO Box 3347
REDFERN NSW 2016

Phone: (02) 9318 0144

Free call: 1800 666 611

Helpline: 1300 665 908

Fax: (02) 9318 2887

Web: www.idrs.org.au

Email: info@idrs.org.au

People with Disability Australia Incorporated

To make a complaint about rights being infringed.

52 Pitt Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

PO Box 666
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Phone: (02) 9370 3100

Toll free: 1800 422 015

TTY: (02) 9318 2138

1800 422 016

Fax: (02) 9318 1372

Web: www.pwd.org.au

Email: pwd@pwd.org.au

Employment

From 1 January 2010, all private sector employers in NSW have been covered by the national workplace relations system.

Private sector employment

Fair Work Australia

Fair Work Australia is the national workplace relations tribunal. It is an independent body with power to carry out a range of functions relating to the safety net of minimum wages and employment conditions; enterprise bargaining; industrial action; dispute resolution; termination of employment and other workplace matters.

Level 8, Terrace Tower, 80 William Street
EAST SYDNEY NSW 2011

National help line: 1300 799 675

Phone: (02) 8374 6666

Fax: (02) 9380 6990

Email: sydney@fwa.gov.au

Web: www.fwa.gov.au

Fair Work Ombudsman

The Fair Work Ombudsman's jurisdiction is set out in the Fair Work Act, and operates independently of Government. The Fair Work Ombudsman's functions include promoting harmonious, productive and cooperative workplace relations and ensuring compliance with Commonwealth workplace laws.

Level 5, 255 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 13 13 94

TTY: 1800 555 677

NRS: 13 13 94

TIS: 13 14 50

Fax: 1800 618 366

Web: www.fairwork.gov.au

NSW public sector and local government employment

NSW Industrial Relations Commission

IRC conciliates and arbitrates to resolve industrial disputes, sets conditions of employment and fixes wages and salaries by making industrial awards, approves enterprise agreements and decides claims of unfair dismissal.

Public Sector appeals – IRC may hear and determine appeals against decisions relating to the discipline and promotion of NSW public sector employees. Members of the NSW Police also have appeal rights in respect of refusal to have injury or illness classified as work related.

Transport Appeal Boards – empowered to hear and determine appeals to dismiss or otherwise discipline employees of NSW public sector transport authorities. They also determine appeals against decisions to promote other employees to vacant positions. The Boards will determine which employee is most entitled to the appointment. When hearing an appeal a Board consists of either the President of the NSW Industrial

Relations Commission or another member to whom the President has delegated this function.

2–24 Rawson Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: 131 628
TTY: 1800 555 677
Fax: (02) 9020 4700

Web:
www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au

WorkCover Authority of NSW

For occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation information.

92–100 Donnison Street
GOSFORD NSW 2250

Locked Bag 2906
LISAROW NSW 2252

Phone: (02) 4321 5000

Info

Centre: 131 050

TTY: 133 677

Fax: (02) 4325 4145

Web: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Energy and Water

Energy and Water Ombudsman

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) provides a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for all electricity and gas customers in New South Wales, and some water customers.

If you have a problem, talk to your supplier first. If the problem isn't fixed or you're not satisfied with the supplier's response, you can lodge a complaint with EWON.

Level 10, 323 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Reply Paid K1343
HAYMARKET NSW 1239

Free call: 1800 246 545

NRS: 133 677

TIS: 131 450

Free fax: 1800 812 291

Web: www.ewon.com.au

Email: omb@ewon.com.au

Financial

Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS)

FOS's independent dispute resolution processes covers financial services disputes including banking, credit, loans, general insurance, life insurance, financial planning, investments, stock broking, managed funds and pooled superannuation trusts.

GPO Box 3
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Phone: (03) 9613 7366

Toll free: 1300 780 808

Fax: (03) 9613 6399

Web: www.fos.org.au

Email: info@fos.org.au

Funded services

Government departments

Community Services (CS)

CS promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and works to build stronger families and communities. Provides child protection services, parenting support and early intervention, foster care, adoption services and help for communities affected by disaster.

4–6 Cavill Avenue
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

Locked Bag 4028
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

Phone: (02) 9716 2222

Free call: 1800 000 164

Fax: (02) 9716 2999

Web: www.community.nsw.gov.au

Aging, Disability and Home Care (ADHC)

ADHC provides services and support for older people, people with a disability, their families and carers to help them live more independently.

Lvl 5, 83 Clarence Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 8270 2000

TTY: (02) 8270 2167

Web: www.adhc.nsw.gov.au

Email: servicembx@fac.nsw.gov.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman

Considers and investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by an Australian Government department or agency, including the Australian taxation office, Australia post, Centrelink, Child Support agency and Department of immigration and citizenship.

Level 7, North Wing, 477 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

PO Box K825
HAYMARKET NSW 1240

Toll free: 1300 362 072

Fax: (02) 9211 4402

Web: www.ombudsman.gov.au

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Independent Commission Against Corruption

The ICAC investigates corrupt conduct in the NSW public sector.

Level 21, 133 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 500
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 8281 5999

Toll free: 1800 463 909

TTY: (02) 8281 5773

Fax: (02) 9264 5364

Web: www.icac.nsw.gov.au

Email: icac@icac.nsw.gov.au

Local Government

Level 2, 5 O'Keefe Avenue
NOWRA NSW 2541

Locked Bag 3015
NOWRA NSW 2541

Phone: (02) 4428 4100

TTY: (02) 4428 4209

Fax: (02) 4428 4199

Web: www.dlg.nsw.gov.au

Email: dlg@dlg.nsw.gov.au

NSW Commission for Children and Young People

Looks after the interests of children and young people in NSW. Coordinates employment screening for child related employment.

Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Phone: (02) 9286 7276

TTY: (02) 9286 7286

Fax: (02) 9286 7267

Web: www.kids.nsw.gov.au

Email: kids@kids.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

Go to *page 6* for details. See *back cover* for contacts.

Members of Parliament

Your Federal Member of Parliament

See *Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices* in the telephone directory.

Web: www.aph.gov.au

Your State Member of Parliament

See *Parliament of NSW* in the telephone directory.

Web: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au

Health

Health Care Complaints Commission

Doctors, other health care providers, hospitals or health services.

Level 13, 323 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Locked Bag 18
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

DX 11617 SYDNEY DOWNTOWN

Phone: (02) 9219 7444

Toll free: 1800 043 159

TTY: (02) 9219 7555

Fax: (02) 9281 4585

Web: www.hccc.nsw.gov.au

Email: hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au

Private Health Insurance Ombudsman

Suite 2, Level 22, 580 George Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Free call: 1800 640 695

NRS: 1800 555 677

TIS: 131 450

Fax: (02) 8235 8778

Web: www.phio.org.au

Email: info@phio.org.au

Legal

Lawyers and Solicitors

Office of the Legal Services Commissioner

Phone the inquiry line for advice before submitting a written complaint.

Level 9, 75 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 4460
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 9377 1800

Free call: 1800 242 958

TTY: (02) 9377 1855

Fax: (02) 9377 1888

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/olsc

Email: olsc@agd.nsw.gov.au

State Court Judges, Magistrates or Judicial Officers

Judicial Commission of NSW

Level 5, 301 George Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 3634
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 9299 4421

Fax: (02) 9290 3194

Web: www.judcom.nsw.gov.au

Email: judcom@judcom.nsw.gov.au

Media

Print

Australian Press Council

For articles or editorial in the print media.

Suite 10.02

117 York Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9261 1930

Toll free: 1800 025 712

Fax: (02) 9267 6826

Web: www.presscouncil.org.au

Email: info@presscouncil.org.au

Television and Radio

Australian Communications and Media Authority

For unresolved complaints and breaches of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

Level 5, The Bay Centre

65 Pirrama Road

PYRMONT NSW 2009

PO Box Q500

Queen Victoria Building
NSW 1230

Phone: (02) 9334 7700

Toll free: 1800 226 667

Fax: (02) 9334 7799

Web: www.acma.gov.au

ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs

For ABC television or radio.

GPO Box 9994

SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 139 994

TTY: 1800 627 854

Web: www.abc.net.au

Independent Complaints Review Panel

For complaints related to serious bias, lack of balance or unfair treatment in an ABC broadcast.

GPO Box 688

SYDNEY NSW 1585

Web: www.abc.net.au

Special Broadcasting Service

For SBS television or radio.

14 Herbert Street

ARTARMON NSW 2064

Locked Bag 028

CROWS NEST NSW 1585

Toll free: 1800 500 727

Web: www.sbs.com.au

Email: comments@sbs.com.au

Police

Commonwealth Ombudsman

For complaints about Federal Police.

See *Government departments* (page 14).

NSW Ombudsman

Go to *page 6* for details. See *back cover* for contacts.

Police Integrity Commission

For complaints about serious police corruption and misconduct.

Level 3, 111 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 3880
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 9321 6700

Free call: 1800 657 079

Fax: (02) 9321 6799

Web: www.pic.nsw.gov.au

Email: contactus@pic.nsw.gov.au

Privacy

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

See *Access to information* (page 8).

Privacy NSW

Privacy NSW is the Office of the NSW Privacy Commissioner. Our aim is to protect and promote privacy rights in NSW.

Level 11, 1 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 7011
Sydney NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 8019 1600

Fax: (02) 8114 3755

Web: www.privacy.nsw.gov.au

Email:
privacyinfo@privacy.nsw.gov.au

Real estate agents or landlords and builders

NSW Fair Trading

Investigate unfair practices and ensure that the products sold in NSW are safe and meet regulations and safety standards. They also register businesses, co-operatives and associations, and issue occupational licences.

Fair Trading have several metropolitan and regional locations check their website for an advisory centre nearest you.

1 Fitzwilliam Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

PO Box 972
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Phone: (02) 9895 0111

Enquiries: 133 220

TTY: 1300 723 404

Fax: (02) 9895 0222

Web: www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Telecommunications

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is a free and independent alternative dispute resolution scheme for small business and residential consumers in Australia with unresolved complaints about their telephone or internet services.

PO Box 276
Collins Street West
MELBOURNE VIC 8007

Phone: (03) 8600 8700

Free call: 1800 062 058

TTY: 1800 675 692

NRS: 1800 555 677

TIS: 131 450

Free fax: 1800 630 614

Web: www.tio.com.au

Email: tio@tio.com.au

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NSW Ombudsman
Level 24, 580 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

General enquiries: (02) 9286 1000
Toll free (outside Sydney Metro Area, NSW only): 1800 451 524
Tel. typewriter (TTY): (02) 9264 8050
Facsimile: (02) 9283 2911
Email: nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au

www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Feedback is welcome.

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